

CLASSROOMS THAT CARE: BUILDING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

by:

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Every child has a right to education; but not just any education — they have the right to a safe, equitable, and inclusive education. The children should have the right to learn without barriers such as disabilities, socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientation and gender identity, learning styles and abilities (Childhope Staff, 2025). By creating an environment where the students feel valued, respected, and safe from harm and discrimination, they are more likely to participate and engage, therefore improving their academic performance and learning (Dini, 2025).

In order to create such environments, teachers need to look beyond academic achievement and look into each fragment that makes the child who they are. Teachers may choose to consider the “Whole-Child,” an approach promoted by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). This framework is composed of five tenets: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and sustainable (ISTE + ASCD, 2026) . These interconnected tenets recognize that students thrive when their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs are addressed alongside their academic growth. Through this framework, schools can cultivate learning environments where every child feels a sense of belonging, develops meaningful relationships, and is empowered to reach their full potential (Slade, 2013) .

Since every learner brings unique strengths, experiences, and challenges into the classroom, creating a safe and inclusive learning environment requires recognizing and responding to these differences. While all learners benefit from these environments, the effect is more profound in special populations, including those with disabilities,

culturally and linguistically diverse learners, economically disadvantaged students, gifted and talented students, and at-risk youth (Childhope Staff, 2025).

Aside from the whole-child approach, teachers may also implement classroom strategies to cultivate a safe and inclusive classroom. This includes establishing classroom norms that set expected behaviors and routines for the students, use of inclusive and non-discriminatory language especially in terms of gender, race, religion, sexuality, and other diverse characteristics, encourage active listening and engaging in respectful discussions, and lastly, address biases and issues such as bullying and discrimination (DepEd Tambayan, 2023).

Additionally, the K-12 curriculum also puts emphasis on socio-emotional learning in the classroom and school environment, which inculcates essential life values to the learners through areas like Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, extracurricular organizations such as Barkada Kontra Droga, and subject integration (Hernando-Malipot, 2023).

While inclusive education has established its importance, teachers still face challenges in creating such a learning environment. Some of these include: limited resources and accessible facilities due to budget constraints and bureaucracy (The Asia Foundation, 2024), time constraints are also a problem because inclusive education requires teachers to invest time in planning lessons that are appropriate and inclusive for all students, considering that the average class size of each classroom is typically averaged at 45-50 students in one classroom. (Theoria Technical College, 2024; Cervantes et al., 2022), and resistance to change due to culture, attitudes, or fear of more work and lack of training (Ratheeswari & Nallathambi, 2023).

Safe and inclusive learning environments can go beyond an educational concept and become a reality where every learner feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed. To address these issues, administrative intervention, teacher training support,

and the teacher's effort to explore more strategies in creating inclusive classrooms are all necessary (Ratheeswari & Nallathambi, 2023).

A classroom that cares is one that recognizes that every learner is more than their academic performance. It is a space where differences are respected, challenges are addressed, and every student is given the opportunity to participate and succeed. Through inclusive practices and a whole-child perspective, educators can create environments that nurture not only knowledge and skills but also confidence, belonging, and well-being. Although creating such classrooms requires overcoming significant challenges, the commitment to ensuring that every child feels valued remains essential in building a more equitable education system.

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